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The War To Get Rid Of The VC Cadres

By COL. ROBERT D. HEINL
JR.

SAIGON—Besides the military war in South Vietnam, a second war goes on that people rarely hear of. This murky struggle sometimes involves ambush, even assassination, patient surveillance always, and psychology. Its objective is to identify and root out the underground infrastructure of the Viet Cong, or as intelligence officers know it, the VCI.

The VCI is the viscera, brains, and central nervous system of the guerrilla movement inside South Vietnam. Closely but secretly paralleling the legitimate government at nearly every level, the VCI—composed of hard-core Communist political cadres—rules parts of the country not yet under government control, obtains intelligence for enemy tactical units, carries on the VC war of political terror in every city and hamlet, provides VC recruiters, couriers, agents, trigger-men, and spies, and collects secret "taxes," or payoffs.

According to informed sources, some 71,000 members of the Mafia-like VCI are at large and operating inside South Vietnam. Their existence poses as great a threat to the future freedom and stability of South Vietnam as Hanoi's uniformed invaders.

GETTING AT (and then getting) the VCI may well determine the ultimate success of pacification in Vietnam, for it is the VCI cadres who are pacification's most implacable and most invisible enemies. The program which has these persons as its target, is known among Americans as Operation Phoenix and to the Vietnamese as "Phung Hoang."

Phoenix was originally established in 1967 by the CIA. It was and is closely modeled on the similar (and eventually highly successful) British program devised by Sir Robert Thompson to expose and destroy the Communist guerrilla infrastructure in Malaya.

Until recently, Phoenix was conducted in deep secrecy. But two developments have brought much of the program into the open. One was the insistence of Senator Fulbright in publicizing his version of Phung Hoang as an assassination and "counter-terror" program (which it is not). The other was realization that, to make progress, this type of effort needed to involve the populace at large, on whom the VCI bear hardest. As a result, Phung Hoang (or at least certain sides of it) is now widely publicized in order to develop Vietnamese support and information.

ALTHOUGH sponsored, launched and advised by the U. S., Phoenix is a Vietnamese program. That is why its American advisors prefer to speak of it as Phung Hoang and de-emphasize the code-word, "Phoenix."

The heart of Phung Hoang lies in 253 district-level intelligence-coordinating committees with the acronym of DIOCC's. Here, following the Malayan model, representatives of police, military intelligence, the district chief, and an American advisor (formerly CIA, now usually a somewhat sketchily indoctrinated Army lieutenant) pool and compare intelligence leads on VC activities, building standard dossiers on suspected VCI. When enough evidence builds up, an arrest or interception is made.

Since key VCI (like Mafiosi leaders with their "soldiers") travel with fast-gun escorts, the arrest of VCI sometimes involves ambush, shoot-outs, and killings. Here is where the program gets its name as one of assassination. But some arrests in fact involve no more than a policeman and a warrant.

FOR THE tough arrests, for the interception of clandestine agents and messengers, and for ambushes, Phung Hoang uses tough operatives.

The enforcement arm of Phung Hoang may, according to the case, include Provincial Reconnaissance Units (PRU),

Armed Propaganda Teams (APT), Kit Carson Scouts (KCS), or U. S. Navy Seal Teams (NST). All are small-size, highly trained, and designed to exploit small targets and get in and get out rapidly. When required, these teams are backed by National Police Field Force (NPF) platoons, and by U. S. army war-dog tracker platoons (usually composed of Labradors).

Men in any of these organizations (except the Navy beach-runners of the Seal teams and the soldier dog-handlers) often have rough and shadowy pasts. Former VC and Communist defectors are employed, and—with the zeal of the convert—often perform bravely. (This reporter spoke with a wizened ex-VC, Kit Carson Scout who has earned a U. S. Silver Star, a Bronze Star, and a Purple Heart to go with each. Because of the risks involved, pay is high and few questions are asked. Liberal rewards are also paid by the government to informers.

BUT THESE people are not hired killers. They are hired to bring in live prisoners because it is impossible to interrogate a corpse. For every subject the PRU have to kill, they bring in over 15 live ones.

Until last year, arrest of a suspect closed the case as far as Phung Hoang went. He was turned over to the appropriate tribunal, or awarded preventive detention, or sometimes politically lost sight of. Now that is all changed.

Today, every suspect not released by district authorities has to be sent forward for adjudication by the Province Security Committee (which is a higher-echelon version of the DIOCC). After questioning at the Province Security Center (PSC), he and his dossier are combed by the committee. Although not a tribunal, the committee can award up to two years' preventive detention for "re-education," may refer serious cases to the courts for

criminal trial, or may release suspects for lack of evidence, as happens in about 30 per cent of cases.

Thereafter, in theory, intensive political re-education takes place during confinement, and a supervised parole system follows up returned detainees. One of the main problems for Phoenix is to improve this machinery. As in the case of American prisons, true re-education and effective parole supervision have proven easier said than realized.

Phung Hoang has been frequently criticized for lack of immediate success and because it is still gnawing only at the outer fringes of the VCI. The same criticisms (and for much the same reasons) can be levelled at the U. S. Justice Department's war on the Mafia, where they are only now proceeding against the village chief of Newark, N. J.

ACTUALLY, Phung Hoang is a long-haul project. It has not even yet solidly identified all its targets (although it now knows the true identity of about 44,000 of the 71,000 estimated VCI). Using computers ("to a disgusting extent," said one official), gradually completing complex "wiring diagrams" of VC organization, Phung Hoang, works patiently ahead. Last year, more than 20,000 VCI were killed, captured, or rallied to the government. So far this year—under tougher criteria and supervision—nearly 7,500 VCI have been killed, captured, have rallied, or been sentenced by provincial committees or the courts.

If the war should end in a political adjustment between the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese government (as many Americans advocate), the VCI, if not uprooted and exposed, will resort to every device of intrigue, corruption and terror to bring South Vietnam under the Communist domination of Hanoi. And this is the ultimate stake in the shadowy, chance game of Phung Hoang.

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It differs from the original US commitment in Vietnam in that it is unadmitted and all the hope is in the future. It differs from the original that the skill can, or should, be nailed to the wall is gone. It differs from the US commitment to Laos in that it can't be kept hidden, even for a short time.

Nixonisation, for all that, is produced by the same factors that brought Vietnam and Laos to the television screens of America: a bureaucratic and military impulse to expand rather than to contract; an unwillingness to accept small defeats even at the risk of bigger ones; and a really tragic inability to assign meaningful priorities of national interest. And a power vacuum.

There is not, for the moment, a US AID programme or a budget subsidy, or a support fund to underwrite the increasingly worthless riel. But there is an economic attaché, whose staff will grow too. USIS now confines itself mostly to showing films for the amusement of an expanding corps of resident journalists. But the possibility of libraries and Cambodian-American associations "is under study". And won't the Cambodians need a little help in psy-war too?

And the savings. "The appropriation (for military expenditures) cannot be that big," says one important US official. "It is coming out of the MAAG budget, which is only US \$350 million for the whole world."

So the official aid total will be \$20 million or \$30 million or maybe even \$70 million if the Nixon administration feels the senate will swallow it.

But who is paying for the South Vietnamese troops, and out of which allocations? And for the Khmer Krom? For the tactical support missions? For the Thai and South Vietnamese equipment that will come in from Saigon and Bangkok, and be replaced in the "donor" countries? It will come, all told, to about \$500 million. More next year.

For the moment, however, Nixonisation, like Vienamisation before it, is undoubtedly having its impact. The Phnom Penh rickshaw drivers are learning English; the Cambodians officers are going off for training in America; there are a lot of dead Vietcong out in the woods; and for the moment, US fire-power and South Vietnamese troops are keeping the communists from Phnom Penh's door.

All this is being done as inconspicuously as possible. For example, the US Embassy can call or veto American air strikes in Cambodia but doesn't boast about it. The military attachés don't wear uniforms.

It's a great deal to do inconspicuously. And what it really means is that Nixon administration is grasping for victory, less and less limited, as the way out. It is a tremendous gamble, because now the whole of Indochina, not just South Vietnam, is at stake.

The short skyscraper is already the biggest building in Phnom Penh, and it has just begun to grow. But we shall have to wait a time now to find out if hiding in the grass Cambodian-style is any less sterile than the older tactics of Laos and Cambodia, and was worth forsaking the genuinely "low profile" Richard Nixon promised when he took office.

SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN NORTH VIETNAM

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, it has become obvious that the faint hearts in our Nation would quit and surrender in South Vietnam without ever considering what the situation might be like in North Vietnam.

They would have a nation of 200,000,000—a nation that is the strongest on earth—knuckle under to a few million rice farmers whose chief weapons are courage and determination—things some Americans appear to be short on.

But despite their courage and determination, all is not well with the North Vietnamese.

A Japanese newsman who recently toured that nation tells us, in fact, that it suffers from serious problems.

United Press International published a story yesterday, that I did not see in the local newspapers, that quotes the Japanese reporter.

In the hope that it may give new courage to many who have felt the United States must quit, accept defeat, surrender, and abandon the South Vietnamese, I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Tokyo.—A Japanese newsman who toured North Vietnam and intervened its leaders said Monday Hanoi faces serious labor and logistical problems and might be in real trouble if the United States resumes bombing.

Shigeru Usami of the Mainichi newspapers said in a luncheon address that North Vietnam speaks hopefully of victory but, "I notice there are serious problems they have to face."

Usami, a China expert for the Mainichi, one of Japan's national newspapers, spent 40 days in North Vietnam in May and June and interviewed Premier Pham Van Dong and Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the deposed Cambodian ruler. He visited Hanoi, Haiphong, Vinh and other points.

"There is a danger of the slackening of morale of the people," he said. "North Vietnam has a very serious labor shortage in factories. Transportation is a bottleneck."

"In the agricultural area, the labor shortage is very evident. I visited North Vietnam at the busiest time of the year for farmers, and I heard that agricultural cooperatives could not handle their work."

"I saw many old men and old women, housewives and young girls in their low teens and young boys doing farm work. Judging from such manpower shortages, there must be a limit in human resources in their expanding the war beyond Vietnam."

Usami said the one-man concrete air raid shelters placed every five yards on Hanoi streets are not being maintained.

"A year ago, the Hanoi shelters were cleaned once a week or so," the Japanese newsman said. "But in my 40 days, I saw none of them cleaned. Terrible odors came from the shelters and there was a general abandonment. After rains, they are filled with water and earth."

Speaking of the shelter neglect, he said, "If America resumes bombing of the north, maybe North Vietnam will be in very serious straits."

SOURCES OF DISSENT — COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS BY ROBERT S. MICHAELS

Mr. CRANSTON. Mr. President, it is vitally important for all of us to know the thoughts of emerging leaders of the oncoming generation of Americans.

I was struck by the clear, strong views set forth in the commencement address delivered recently at the University of California at Los Angeles by a young citizen of my State.

Many will find much in his words that they will disagree with, and certainly much in his speech is controversial. I trust, however, that no one of any age,

of any generation, will quarrel with his attempt to articulate the principles associated with the founding of our Republic to the challenges and crises of our time, nor with his expressed devotion to "the very form of government we all cherish so deeply today."

I ask unanimous consent that this commencement address by Robert S. Michaels, delivered June 18 at UCLA, be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SOURCES OF DISSENT

On July 4, 1776, a group of young men, with high ideals, and loong hair, met together to determine the fate of this country. Their purpose was to start a revolution . . . a revolution which fostered the very form of government we all cherish so deeply today. They recognized that men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that all men are created equal—that these truths were self-evident. The very essence of their beliefs, the nucleus of their protest was the conviction that governments are instituted among men to secure the rights of the populace—that these governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that when ever any form of government becomes destructive of that way of life, that it is the obligation of the people to alter or abolish it, and institute a new government.

We, the youth of today, are not unlike our founding fathers, in that both groups are the idealists of their day. Our numbers are greater, our arguments more pressing, our purpose is to preserve the American way, rather than to destroy it.

We are thinkers, foremost. Our best approach to change is through reasoned argument. The fodder for this rhetoric comes from you, our parents, our teachers, and from the generations that have come before us. You have raised us, directed our thoughts and established within us the frame of reference from which we will view life. Our thoughts and actions are a direct reflection of you—of what we see in you, of what you really are. If you find us a contradiction, then the contradiction is in you!

All our lives we have been taught of the glorious heritage that is ours as Americans, and of how we must not forsake it. You have given us the privilege to think and learn in a free society, and for this we are most appreciative. However, this opportunity has made us selfish—we have been immersed in the idealism on which this country was founded, and we do not intend to give it up easily. The ideal citizen is more than an individual who pays his taxes, or is willing to sacrifice his life for the preservation of the system. For you see, a long hard battle was fought in the 1700's—a battle to establish this as a government of the people. A government controlled by the people through their elected representatives. A government in which you and I are to be consulted at every step. Our forefathers sacrificed efficiency solely to prevent one man from gaining the power to rule millions. It was not intended that the people blindly believe in the president and do as he says, but rather that the president consult all the people and do as they request. The ideal citizen must insure the preservation of our system of government as our forefathers intended it to be. Now, we reach out to embrace this idealism, this essence of America—it isn't there. We cannot forsake this idealism, we cannot accept the bastardization of our government by those who are entrusted with its preservation. Our beliefs will not be diluted by life's experiences. We shall not yield!

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My Lai

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THE EVENING STAR

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Lawyer Says CIA Planned My Lai Purge

ATLANTA (AP) — A defense lawyer says the Central Intelligence Agency planned the deaths of many, if not all, of the adult civilians killed in the alleged 1968 massacre at My Lai.

Charles L. Weltner, a former congressman who is the attorney for Sgt. Esequiel Torres, one of 12 soldiers accused of participating, said yesterday the CIA "was very pleased with My Lai" because a large number of suspected Viet Cong agents were eliminated.

He said his charge could be proven by CIA records to which the My Lai defendants have been denied access.

"It is anticipated that it can be established from CIA records that many, if not all, of the adult civilians who died in My Lai on March 16, 1968, were placed upon 'black lists' prepared by the CIA, meaning lists of persons scheduled for assassination," Weltner said.

His statement was included in a summary of evidence filed with a panel of three federal judges in support of Torres' contention that the Army will not give him a fair trial. Weltner's summary was kept secret by the court until yesterday.

Torres is charged with three deaths at My Lai and with hanging a civilian in another incident.